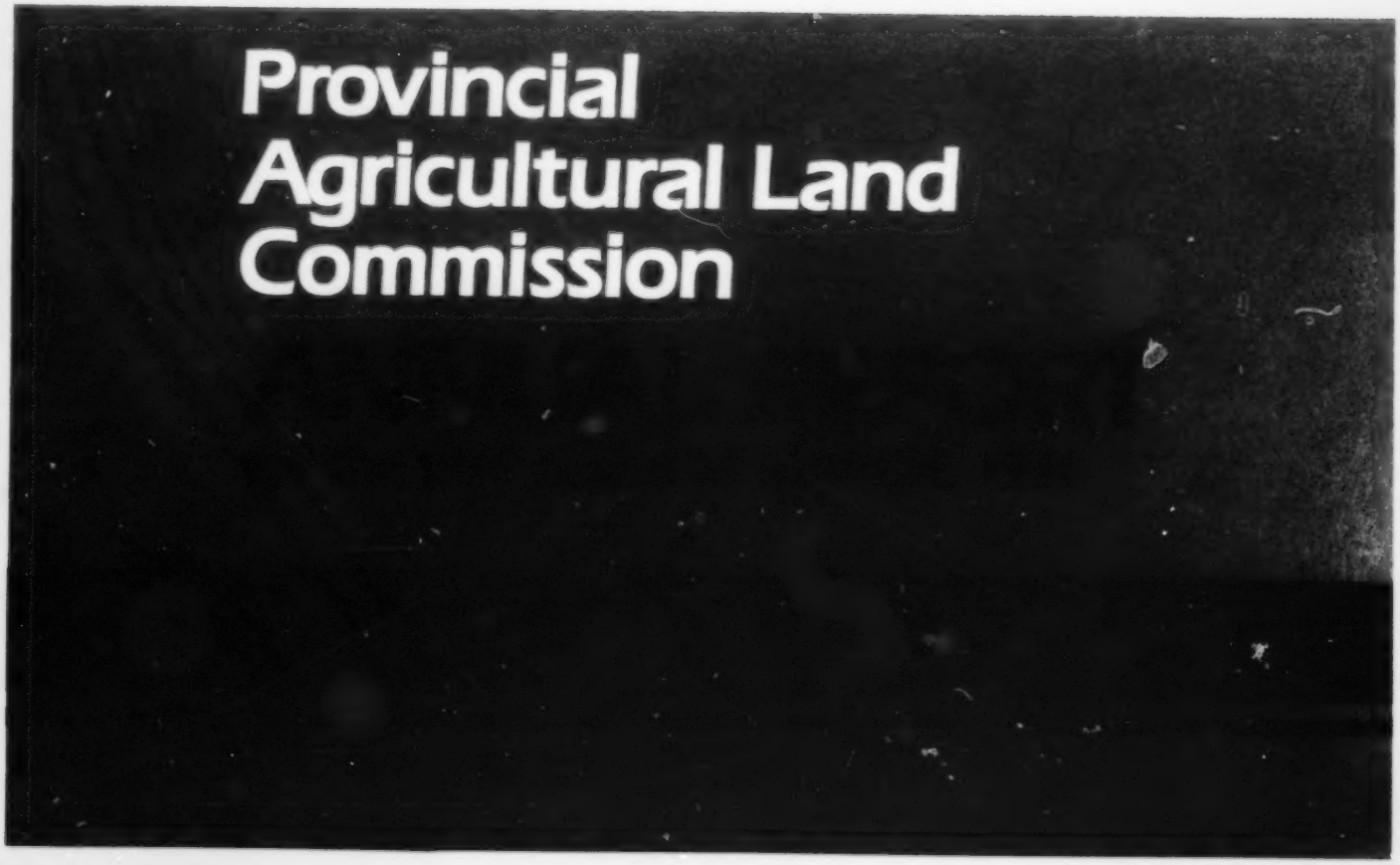
Province of
British Columbia

Provincial Agricultural Land Commission



Province of
British Columbia

Ministry of
Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food

Honourable Bill Barlee, Minister

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Province of
British Columbia

Provincial Agricultural Land Commission

ANNUAL REPORT

for the year ended 31 MARCH, 1991

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Province of British Columbia

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Parliament Buildings
Victoria
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The Honourable David C. Lam
Lieutenant-Governor
Province of British Columbia

May It Please Your Honour:

I have the pleasure of submitting for your consideration the Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission for the period April 1, 1990 to March 31, 1991.

Yours truly,

N L Barlee

Honourable Bill Barlee
Minister

British Columbia
Agricultural
Land Commission

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Room 133, 4940 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 4K6

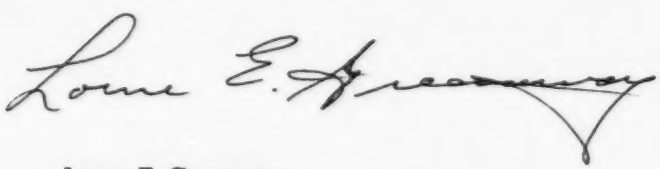
November 6, 1991

The Honourable Bill Barlee
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC.
V8V 1X4

Dear Minister:

Pursuant to Section 28 of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, I respectfully submit the Annual Report and Financial Statement of the British Columbia Agricultural Land Commission for the period April 1, 1990 to March 31, 1991.

Yours truly,



Lorne E. Greenaway
Chair
Agricultural Land Commission

Contents

Message From the Chair	1
Overview	2
Preserving our Foodlands	2
About the Agriculture and Food Industry	2
The Need to Preserve our Foodlands	2
The Response in British Columbia	3
The Mandate of the Commission	3
Our Goal	3
Our Approach	4
The Commission's Day-to-Day Operations	4
Highlights of 1990-1991	5
Round Table on the Environment and the Economy	5
Urban Infrastructure	5
Golf Courses	5
Policy / General Orders	6
Okanagan Valley	6
Highways	6
Local Government	7
Media Coverage	7
Commission Meetings	8
Financial Report	10
Notes to Financial Report	11
Commissioners	12
Commission Staff	13

Message From the Chair

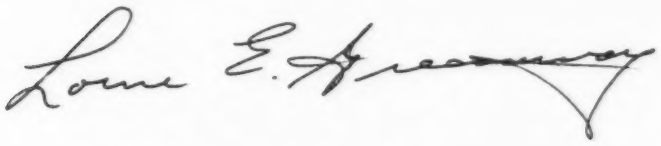
In November of 1990 I was appointed by Order in Council to the position of full-time Chairman of the Agricultural Land Commission. I would like to personally acknowledge the tremendous contribution made by my predecessor, Ian Paton. During his ten years in the Chair, Ian earned the respect of all with whom he came in contact. He set a level of performance and excellence that will be difficult to attain.

Since my appointment I have been occupied with reviewing the procedures of the Commission as well as studying our land preservation system. Developmental pressures are escalating in many areas of the Province and it will take a great deal of effort and cooperation by all levels of government, as well as by the people of British Columbia, to ensure that future growth has a minimal effect on our irreplaceable foodlands.

In his book "Travels with Charlie in Search of America" (1962), John Steinbeck sounded a warning note to his native California which could well be considered by all of us who reside in beautiful British Columbia:

> I remember Salinas, the town of my birth, when it proudly announced four thousand citizens. Now it is eighty thousand and leaping pell mell on a mathematical progression — a hundred thousand in three years and perhaps two hundred thousand in ten, with no end in sight. Even those people who find joy in numbers and are impressed with figures are beginning to worry, gradually becoming aware that there must be a saturation point and the progress may be a progression toward strangulation.

The challenge facing us must be taken seriously as we have a vital heritage to preserve. We must also ensure that people are treated fairly and common sense is paramount in our decision-making.



Lorne E. Greenaway
Chair

Overview

Preserving Our Foodlands

The Agricultural Land Commission is the primary steward of B.C.'s valuable agricultural land with a track record of two decades of hard work and success. It preserves an important industry which contributes significantly to the quality and way of life in British Columbia.

About the Agriculture and Food Industry

- The agriculture and food industry is a $9 billion industry in B.C., involving over 120 different commodities and employing nearly a quarter of a million British Columbians.
- This sector also contributes significantly to Canada as a trading nation — annual agricultural exports from B.C. to non-Canadian destinations are now valued at over $600 million.
- The total investment in B.C. agriculture in terms of land, equipment, stock and other tangible assets is over $6 billion.
- To keep the agriculture and food industry strong and vibrant, B.C. must also focus on the needs of farmers who are the key players in this process, as valuable contributors to the economic, social and cultural life of B.C.

The Need to Preserve Our Foodlands

- Since the end of World War II agricultural land has been rapidly disappearing all over the world.
- Even where productive farmland is not being lost to forces such as erosion, urbanization, the growth of deserts and salinization, farming practices in many countries have deteriorated to such a degree that agricultural products from these areas are now of questionable value.
- Elsewhere, local governments have attempted to regulate the use of farmland through zoning and local controls. This has often resulted in a complex web of often conflicting land policies and the inconsistent application of land use principles.
- Even though B.C. is a large province (bigger than Washington, Oregon and California combined) only a small portion can contribute to our food needs. And about one half of the ALR is limited in terms of the range of crops it can support; fortunately, many of these lands represent the backbone of our cattle industry. The other half of the ALR lands have the soil and climate capable of supporting a fuller range of agricultural crops.

- B.C.'s population, now in excess of 3 million people and growing constantly, relies heavily on B.C. grown agricultural products. In fact, the province's agricultural producers supply more than 60% of our food requirements.

- Despite our growing population, a worldwide demand for B.C. products and the tiny proportion of agricultural land in the province, until the 1970's nearly 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of agricultural land were lost each year to urbanization. And since nearly all land converted from agricultural to urban use can never be returned to productive farming, this precious resource was lost permanently.

The Response in British Columbia

- The provincial government's response to the serious erosion of our agricultural land base was to preserve agricultural land through the Agricultural Land Commission.

- Successive provincial governments have endorsed the B.C. approach and enhanced the work of the Commission, which is now a model for provinces, states and countries all over the world, including Newfoundland, Ontario, Oregon and Washington.

The Mandate of the Commission

- B.C.'s *Agricultural Land Commission Act* provides for the establishment and maintenance of the independent Agricultural Land Commission.

- The Commission consists of at least five members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (one of whom is designated Chairman) who report to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

- Commissioners are drawn from a cross-section of agricultural and other sectors, from regions throughout B.C., and are chosen for their demonstrated leadership, managerial and other skills.

Our Goals

The goals of the Agricultural Land Commission are simple:

1. To preserve British Columbia's agricultural lands for present *and* future use; AND
2. To encourage the establishment and maintenance of B.C.'s farms and farming community.

Our Approach

The Commission strives to achieve its mandate by encouraging effective land management. Commissioners and staff work closely with landowners, local government, the farm commu-

nity and the general public to ensure our limited supply of agricultural land is available for food production now and in years to come.

The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) covers about 5% of the land mass of the province and includes most of B.C.'s highest quality agricultural land. Since much of this farmland is adjacent to urban centres, the Reserve is often in close proximity to expanding cities and towns.

Reserves were established by regional districts over the period 1974 to 1976 with local input, public meetings and the input of local and provincial governments, ministerial committees and other agencies. Initially the Reserve was comprised of 4.7 million hectares and, despite boundary changes over the years, it remains approximately the same size.

The Reserve can be thought of, quite simply, as a provincial land use zone in favour of agriculture in which non-agricultural uses are regulated, and farm activities are encouraged. This applies to both private and public lands; it covers land presently being farmed as well as land with agricultural potential.

The Commission's Day-to-Day Operations

Since 1974, the Commission has considered over 30,000 different applications from landowners and others wishing to remove land from the ALR, subdivide land within the ALR or use agricultural lands for non-farm purposes. The number of applications is increasing at an annual rate of 5%, and now totals approximately 1,200 per year.

Not only is the number of applications increasing; so is their degree of complexity, the number of issues which must be addressed and the range of people interested in the outcome.

Together with the general public's growing concern over environmental issues, there is also far more public awareness and opinion with respect to each application.

The Commission is supported by a small, efficient staff of 18 who provide professional administrative, drafting, land use planning and research services. It is ably assisted by the field staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and it solicits the input of farmer advisors appointed by the B.C. Federation of Agriculture.

The Commission also relies heavily on municipal councils, regional boards and local government who, together with their staff, support the Reserve through local land use planning programs. The individuals and governments involved at the local level are the first contact with applicants, and are important players in the preservation of agricultural land in B.C.

Overall the Commission has improved efficiency to such a degree that it operates with roughly the same number of staff as a mid-size regional district. As a consequence, while turnaround time for applications is still unacceptable, dramatic improvements have been made.

In addition to processing requests for removals, subdivisions and non-agricultural uses in the ALR, the Commission conducts an array of other activities. It is constantly refining the Reserve boundary to reflect new information and research on crop potential, soil, terrain, present land use, climate and other factors that determine suitability of land for agriculture. The Commission continually works to improve communications with local government, farm organizations, landowners and the general public. And it assists local government with their plans and bylaws to work towards consistency with provincial objectives.

The Commission is active in the area of sustaining the quality of agricultural soils under the *Soil Conservation Act*.

Highlights of 1990-1991

Round Table on the Environment and the Economy

The Commission established an excellent working relationship with the staff of the B.C. Round Table on the Environment and the Economy at a series of workshop sessions on a land and water use strategy in mid-November. This was followed by a meeting with the Director of Sustainable Development to update Commission staff on future plans and activities of the Round Table.

Urban Infrastructure

The Commission continued to express its concern about pressures on the agricultural land base which result from the extension of water, sewer and road systems for urban development. In May the members of the Commission held a meeting with the Honourable Lyall Hanson, then Minister of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Culture to explore these issues. This was folllowed by meetings between senior staff of the Commission and the Minstry's Local Government Services Department to explore better ways of integrating the respective mandates of the two agencies.

Golf Courses

Over the past year the debate over the location of golf courses in the Agricultural Land Reserve continued. Many local governments, including Delta, Surrey, Langley and the Cowichan Valley Regional District began developing guidelines to effectively deal with the issue.

At the request of the Municipality of Delta, the Greater Vancouver Regional District began an important study, partially funded by the ALC, to evaluate the need for golf courses in the Lower Mainland and to establish criteria for decisions about golf courses. While the final report was not completed during this fiscal year, the draft report (prepared by Graham Argyle and Associates) provided an important analysis of the demand for golf courses. It also made a number of recommendations, including:

- non-agricultural land should be the preferred location for golf course development,
- golf courses should not be developed on Class 1, 2, or 3 agricultural lands except where isolated pockets of these types of land are surrounded by non-agricultural lands devoted to urban uses, and
- B.C. Regulation 238/88, which permits golf course development within the Agricultural Land Reserve, should be rescinded.

Similar views were expressed by several B.C. agricultural organizations. For example, resolutions to this effect were passed at the annual general meeting of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture and the annual meeting of the B.C. Institute of Agrologists.

The District of Central Saanich also circulated a resolution amongst all B.C. municipalities and regional districts asking for support to rescind B.C. Regulation 238/88; however, the results of that effort have not been compiled.

Policy / General Orders

In 1990 the Commission began updating its internal policy on Homesite Severance and two of its General Orders:

(1) "The Temporary Use of Mobile Homes as Second Dwellings", of special interest to the Okanagan, Lower Mainland and Southern Vancouver Island; and
(2) "Oil and Gas Well Sites, Gathering and Flow Lines within the ALR", of special interest to the Peace River area.

The updated Homesite Severance Policy was released in October, 1990; this reinforced the original guidelines adopted by the Commission in 1978.

In December the Commission called for municipal and regional district input of the mobile home general order. In February 1991 the Commission held a public meeting in Fort St. John on the well site general order. It is the Commission's intention to finalize the updating of these orders before the end of 1991.

Okanagan Valley

In 1990 much attention was focused on the tree fruit industry which continued to suffer an especially severe cyclical downturn. The Commission was under strong pressure to release many Okanagan properties, notwithstanding the Commission's mandate to consider the long-term suitability of land for farm use.

A major appeal affecting tree fruit lands was heard and determined by the Environment and Land Use Committee of Cabinet (ELUC). The appeal, by the Land Owners' Rights Association in Kelowna, proposed removal of nearly 200 properties consisting of over 1,600 hectares (or 4,000 acres) in the Central Okanagan. ELUC agreed with the decision of the Commission not to permit removal of the land from the Reserve.

Also in 1990 Dr. Peter Lusztig, Dean of Commerce and Business Administration at the University of British Columbia completed his duties as a sole commissioner under the *Inquiry Act* to inquire into the financial condition and future viability of the British Columbia tree fruit industry. One of the results of Dr. Lusztig's report was the establishment of the Okanagan Valley Tree Fruit Authority. This covered the Okanagan, Similkameen, Shuswap and Creston Valley tree fruit areas. In March, 1991 the Agricultural Land Commission and staff met with the members and staff of the Okanagan Valley Tree Fruit Authority to set the stage for what is hoped will be a positive working relationship.

Highways

In 1990 the Commission began working closely with the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and its consultants in the planning for an inland island highway to link the communi-

ties of central and northern Vancouver Island. By offering comment and advice at each major stage in the planning process, the Commission has been able to guide the project away from most of the potential agricultural land conflicts.

Both the Commission and Ministry officials are heartened by the way the process has been working. It is hoped this approach will be extended to other segments of the Island Highway project and major projects elsewhere in the province.

Local Government

The Commission has continued and strengthened its commitment to working with local governments to ensure official plans and bylaws are compatible with Provincial efforts to preserve our foodlands. In the past, many plans have designated land in the Agricultural Land Reserve for agricultural use; over the past year the Commission has been encouraged by new and innovative local government efforts which reflect a more positive approach to dealing with agricultural land.

The Greater Vancouver Regional District and the Township of Langley have each undertaken programs that will greatly enhance the stability of agricultural communities:

1. As a result of the "Creating Our Future" program, the GVRD has become committed to the creation of a "Green Zone" in which elements of the rural landscape — including agriculture — are to be secured from further encroachment by urban uses.
2. The Township of Langley has embarked on an ambitious planning program involving the rural parts of its municipality — most of which are in the ALR. Unlike more traditional official community planning efforts that examine all elements of the community, the Rural Plan for Langley deliberately focuses on the rural areas and problems and opportunities associated with them.

While neither program is complete to date, the Commission believes both will make important contributions to strengthening the preservation of our foodlands, and stand as models of the partnership possible between local and Provincial governments.

Media Coverage

The Commission was pleased to continue to receive wide coverage of its work in local and provincial media. Among the many supportive editorials was the following from the *Oliver Chronicle* dated February 20, 1991:

Defend ALR

Town council's blanket proposal to forward all Agricultural Land Reserve applications to the Land Commission with approval is not a worthy one. It is an abdication of responsibility and has the potential to further erode the preservation of valuable farmland.

Surely no one is maintaining that all of the hundreds of acres of farmland within the town should be opened up for urban development, yet the town council will find itself in the position of rubber stamping any application that crosses the counter.

Since the founding of the ALR in the 1970's, the preservation of farmland has been recog-

nized as a responsibility of the entire province. Farmland is an extremely limited resource in our mountainous province and if we are to conserve this resource for our children and grandchildren, bodies such as the Land Commission will have to possess the powers to prevent short term economic considerations from slowly chipping the green lands into condos and pavement.

Of the negative press which was received, over 95% was related to two or three contentious applications which were appealed to the Environment and Land Use Committee.

Commission Meetings with the General Public, Other Levels of Government and Related Agencies

April 1, 1990 to March 31, 1991:

Name	Place	Date
Public hearings (Re: Raven Forest Products)	Courtenay	April 9/90
Honourable Lyall Hanson	Victoria	May 1/90
Richmond Council Planning and Development Committee (Re: churches)	Burnaby	May 17/90
Maple Ridge planning staff	Burnaby	May 17/90
Delta Council and members of Advisory Planning Ctee.	Burnaby	May 17/90
Armstrong Council and administrator	Armstrong	July 5/90
UBCM	Vancouver	September 19 & 20/90
Delta staff	Burnaby	October 16/90
BC Tree Fruit Authority	Kelowna	October 16/90
Fraser Fort George Regional District and Mayor of Prince George	Prince George	November 29/90
District of Mission	Burnaby	December 20/90

Vernon City Council	Vernon	January 23/91
North Okanagan Regional District	Vernon	January 23/91
Okanagan Similkameen Regional District	Penticton	January 24/91
Penticton City Council	Penticton	January 25/91
Summerland City Council	Summerland	January 25/91
R. Townshend, B.C. Assessment G. Dragushan, Ministry staff P. Lofthouse, Municipal Affairs (Re: Farm Assessment & Taxation)	Burnaby	February 11/91
B.C. Hydro (Re: Kelly Lake/Cheekeye)	Burnaby	February 12/91
Langley Council	Langley	February 12/91
Ministry of Energy, Mines & Petroleum Resources Allan Blair, Agric. Program Manager, Peace River	Fort St. John	February 13/91
Ed Smith, Mediation & Arbitration Board	Fort St. John	February 13/91
Seed Grower's Association (2 commissioners)	Fort St. John	February 13/91
Public meeting (Re: oil and gas drilling)	Fort St. John	February 13/91
District of Taylor	Taylor	February 14/91
Peace River Regional Board	Taylor	February 14/91
Peace River Municipalities Association	Taylor	February 14/91
Cowichan Valley Regional District	Duncan	March 6/91
District of Metchosin	Metchosin	Marrch 8/91
Sunshine Coast Regional District	Sechelt	March 21/91
Central Okanagan Regional District	Kelowna	March 25/91
B.C. Tree Fruit Authority	Kelowna	March 25/91
Kelowna City Council	Kelowna	March 26/91
B.C. Fruit Growers Ass'n.	Kelowna	March 26/91
District of Langley planning staff (Re: Rural Langley Plan)	Langley	March 28/91

Financial Report – Year Ended March 31, 1991

Statement of Revenue

Income received and credited to the consolidated revenue fund of the Province of British Columbia was as follows (Note 2):

	1990/91	1989/90
Sale of Properties	$ —	$ 18,430

Statement of Expenditure

Description	1990/91	1989/90
Salaries & Benefits	$ 842,690	$ 799,211
Fees & Allowances	162,757	120,402
Professional Services	63,967	34,192
Travel — government employees	48,039	25,274
Office expense	9,538	12,551
Furniture & Equipment	10,037	5,217
Material & Supplies	14,374	9,864
Rent	117,508	230,808
Data & Word Processing Systems	18,799	3,710
Other	55	23
	$1,287,764	$1,241,252

Approved by the Commission:

Lorne E. Greenaway, Chair

K. Miller, General Manager

Notes to Financial Report

1. Soil Conservation Act Deposits

	1990/91	1989/90
Cash on Deposit	**$14,000**	**$11,500**

In addition to the foregoing cash deposits, the Commission holds letters of credit and other securities totalling $1,358,630 under the Soil Conservation Act guaranteeing restoration of properties in accordance with sound agricultural practices.

2. As of April 1, 1988, all farmlands, except one parcel, administered in co-operation with the Farmland Resources Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries were transferred to the Ministry of Crown Lands. The sale of the one parcel was completed in fiscal 1989/90.

Commissioners

For the Agricultural Land Commission to effectively fulfill its role of preserving B.C.'s foodlands, Commissioners require a wide range of agricultural and administrative skills and experience, and should come from a variety of regions of the province. All of the Commissioners are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor upon the recommendation of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; the Lieutenant-Governor also designates one member as Chairman.

Lorne E. Greenaway
Chair (Victoria)
Veterinarian; Former Cattle Rancher and College Lecturer; Former Member of Parliament; Former Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

Robert Murdoch (Burnaby)
Former General Manager of the Agricultural Land Commission; Former Regional Director for the Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing; Former Manager of the University of British Columbia Endowment Lands

Harold Allison (Princeton)
Rancher; Past President of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture; Active in a variety of other Agricultural and Community Organizations

Rod King (Penticton)
Full-time Orchardist; Member of Naramata Co-op; Former Director of B.C. Fruit Packers Co-op; Former Member of the Executive of the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association; Former Chairman of Penticton Agricultural Advisory Committee

Jim Collins (Fort St. John)
Grain, Forage Seed and Beef Farmer; Principal of Inter Ag Group Consulting; Executive and Director of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture; Farm Credit Corporation Appeal Board Member; Director of B.C. Grain Producers' Association

John Malenstyn (Delta)
Dairy and Crops Operation; Director of the Mainland Dairyman's Association; President of the Independent Dairyman's Association

Commission Staff

General Manager

Kirk Miller

Administrative Support Staff

M. Jean Sherwood, Executive Secretary
Debi Helps
Patricia Redman
Lucena Varias

Planning Processing and Technical Branch

Jim P. Plotnikoff, Director

Planning

Tony Pellett, Planner
Barry E. Smith, Planner

Research and Processing

Shirley Brightman
Sherry Sumpton
Brenda Felker
Colin Fry
Everett Lew
Gordon Bednard
Brian Underhill
Jane Perch (Auxiliary Appointment)

Mapping

Gerry Hallett

Soils

Director — Vacant
Brian McBride, Soils Specialist

To obtain further copies of this report, please contact the Agricultural Land Commission at 133–4940 Canada Way, Burnaby, British Columbia V5G 4K6. Telephone: (604) 660-7000.